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WHITE-MARKED TUSSOCK MOTH

Among the serious defoliators of shade trees in towns and cities in Pennsylvania, the white-marked Tussock moth(Hemerocampa leucostigma) easily heads the list. In addition to the injury caused by the defoliation of the trees, the unsightly appearance caused by the feeding of the caterpillars and the plastering of cocoons and egg masses on the trunks and larger limbs and on adjacent buildings make them doubly unwelcome.

There are two broods of the moth each year in Pennsylvania and nearby states, the first appearing in May. The insect spends the winter as an egg in conspicuous, white, foamy egg masses which contain from 100 to 400 eggs. The eggs hatch in May and the small caterpillars feed on the underside of the leaves. As they increase in size they eat the larger portions until all but the largest veins are devoured. They prefer leaves of poplar, horse chestnut, soft maple, elm, linden and most fruit trees. The striking appearance of the caterpillars marked with beautiful colors and long black plumes cause them to be easily identified. A pair of plumes protrude over the bright red head and a single plume rises from the opposite end of the body. A broad black band, bordered with yellow, extends the full length of the back. Four white brush-like tufts of hair, or tussocks, stand upright in a row on the back and from these the moth derives its name.

These destructive pests may be controlled with relative ease. A thorough spraying of the foliage with lead arsenate, one and one-half pounds of the powder to 50 gallons of water, during June will destroy the first brood. A second application in August will clean up the second brood if the first spray does not completely answer the purpose. Scraping off and burning the egg masses is another means of control. A sponge soaked in crude creosote, mounted on a long pole and pressed against the egg masses, is also an effective treatment.

It is recommended that egg masses be collected and destroyed. School children and scout organizations can do effective work in this way in controlling this pest.